(d) the steps taken by Government to ensure that all eligible applicants may avail the loan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) According to information furnished by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the total number and amount of education loan (outstanding) during the last three years is given below:

As on	Number of accounts	Amount Rs. in crore
March, 2005	489445	6694
March, 2006	665330	11219
March, 2007	1026215	14391

(c) Data on the number of applications received and the number of applications rejected for education loan is not being maintained by the RBI.

(d) To generate awareness about the Education Loan Scheme and to ensure the eligible applicants avail these loans, publicity is done by banks through newspapers, the electronic media and organization of loan camps at the beginning of the academic session.

Financial Assistance for minorities

529.SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has directed banks to extend financial assistance for minorities all over the country;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has not properly implemented this proposal;

(c) if so, the hurdles being faced by RBI from giving impetus to this proposal; and

(d) the steps Government is proposing for helping minorities to get a fair share of the financial services sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (d) In order to ensure improved financial services for the welfare of minorities, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued a Consolidated Master Circular dated 05.07.2007 to all the Scheduled commercial Banks (SCBs) advising them to take care to see that minority communities source. in a fare and adequate measure, the benefits flowing from various Government sponsored special programmes. The Master circular also envisages creating a separate cell in each bank to ensure smooth flow of credit to minority communities and also covers the role of the lead bank in the 121 districts identified for purposes of earmarking of target and location of development projects under the Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities. Minority communities have also been included in the category of "Weaker Sections" for availing credit within the Priority Sector advances.

In October 2007, Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have been directed by the Government to step up lending to minorities from the level of 9% of total priority sector advances to 15% over the next three years, *i.e.*, upto the end of Financial Year 2009-10.